

OBITUARY

Dr. R. D. Gillespie

DR. R. D. Gillespie, whose unexpected death is an irreparable loss to psychiatry, was for several years a Member of the Council of the *Society*. Though he rarely attended meetings, being much committed in other directions, he was always conscious of the eugenic implications of psychiatry, which he used to stress in lectures to students and in his writings.

His most active help to the *Society* was connected with his membership of an informal Advisory Group which supervised the production of the *Society's* book, *The Chances of Morbid Inheritance*, published in 1934. Dr. Gillespie's death is deeply felt by his many friends and colleagues.

C. P. B.

Professor Charles E. Spearman, F.R.S.

By the death of Professor Charles E. Spearman, F.R.S., formerly Professor of Psychology at University College, London, the country has lost one of its best-known and most active psychologists. He was a member of a well-known Northumberland stock; and, like most male members of his family, was trained as an Army officer. He resigned his commission to study experimental psychology under Wundt in Leipzig. His early interests lay in measuring capacity for sensory discrimination by the new techniques that had been devised in the German laboratory; and in his first important paper he endeavoured to demonstrate that there was a single general capacity underlying all forms of sensory discrimination: this he was disposed to identify "with what Galton had called 'general ability' and Binet 'intelligence.'" Later he developed his "theory of two factors"—the hypothesis that all mental activities are dependent on a single common factor, which he preferred to name not intelligence but "g" and that each contains one other highly "specific" factor, peculiar to itself.

In an article which he contributed to this

REVIEW ("The Heredity of Abilities," 1914, 3, pp. 219-37) he sought to show how his theory at once supported the main contentions of the eugenists and simplified their problems. The traditional notion, adopted by older psychologists, had assumed that mental efficiency was the outcome of a large number of basic factors or faculties, such as observation, memory, imagination, reasoning, etc. This, he argued, introduced unnecessary complications into eugenic arguments and inquiries. Indeed, he questioned the existence of all subsidiary faculties of this type; and considered that the main line of research should consist in estimating the influence of inheritance upon the general factor of so-called intelligence. The specific factors, he believed, were mainly the effect of teaching, training, and other environmental influences.

His theories were later summarized in his two best-known volumes—*The Nature of Intelligence* and *The Abilities of Man*. The controversies that followed their publication did much to stimulate work both in this country and in America on the measurement of intellectual capacities. To-day the majority of contemporary psychologists would probably accept the hypothesis of a single general factor underlying all intellectual activity and mainly if not wholly inborn. On the other hand, more recent research has shown that Spearman's rejection of other innate abilities could hardly be justified. And in his later writings, he himself was inclined to adopt this more eclectic and comprehensive view.

Few British psychologists have aroused such world-wide interest by their researches and their publications; and, even though his theories as he stated them would nowadays be regarded as an over-simplification, nevertheless this very simplification of itself supplied a strong impulse to practical work on mental tests at a time when psychology in Great Britain was still largely preoccupied with questions of a merely philosophical or academic interest.

C. B.